

Message Text

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S E C R E T PRETORIA 4790

NODIS

FOR S/AS (SMITH AND AF (MOOSE) FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: MNUC, SF

SUBJECT: PRESS LEAKS ON US-SOUTH AFRICA NUCLEAR TALKS

1. BRAND FOURIE HAS JUST PASSED TO ME THE TEXT OF DRAFT RAND DAILY MAIL STORY BY RICHARD WALKER OF NEW YORK THAT HAS BEEN SUBMITTED FOR SAG CLEARANCE FOR PUBLICATION IN SA. FOURIE IS NOT CERTAIN WHETHER SAG CAN LEGALLY WITHHOLD PUBLICATION CLEARANCE UNDER TERMS OF LAW WHICH PUTS PREPUBLICATION CONTROLS ON CERTAIN MATTERS PERTAINING TO URANIUM PRODUCTION AND OTHER NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES, BUT ASKS THAT USG CONSIDER TEXT (REPRODUCED IN PARA 3 BELOW) AS BEING PASSED TO US IN CONFIDENCE UNTIL DECISION IS MADE AND PUBLICATION OCCURS. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED BY THE ARTICLE AND CALLED TO BRING MATTER TO MY ATTENTION AS FOLLOW-UP TO DISCUSSION WE HAD ABOUT MY EMPHASIS ON THE SENSITIVITY OF CERTAIN MATERIALS WE WERE PREPARED TO SHOW HIM IN EFFORT TO CLEAR UP KALAHARI QUESTION (REPORTED SEPTEL). FOURIE TOOK PARTICULAR NOTE OF ARTICLE'S REFERENCE TO USA" SATELLITE BIG BIRD 56," TO "LATEST SATELLITE PICTURES", AND TO THE "STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH" AGREED TO DURING JULY TALKS. HE ALSO MADE REFERENCE TO BROAD PRESS COVERAGE GIVEN LAST YEAR TO THE DETAILED STORY WHICH LEAKED OUT ABOUT ORIGINAL KALAHARI SAGA.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 PRETOR 04790 171407Z

2. ALTHOUGH FOURIE UTTERED NO WORD OF PROTEST, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT LEAKS OF THIS SORT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR SAG TO TAKE US SERIOUSLY WHEN WE EMPHASIZE THE SENSITIVITY WITH WHICH WE TREAT SUCH MATTERS. ACCORDINGLY, ONE IS INCLINED TO QUESTION BOTH THE SOURCE AND INTENT OF LEAKS THAT PERMIT SUCH DETAILED PRESS SPECULATION. ALTHOUGH FOURIE SEEMED INCLINED AT FIRST TO THINK THAT SUCH LEAKS

WERE MADE DIRECTLY TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPORTER (WALKER), I SPECULATED THAT IT WAS MUCH MORE LIKELY THAT WALKER WOULD HAVE OBTAINED IT FROM SOME OTHER PRESS SOURCE (SEVERAL DETAILS ARE OBVIOUSLY INCORRECT AND SPECULATIVE.) IN ANY EVENT, IT TOLD HIM THAT I WAS PERSONALLY CONVINCED THAT EVEN THOUGH SUCH LEAKS (INCLUDIN G

THAT OF LAST YEAR) MIGHT APPEAR TO INCLUDE INFORMATION GIVEN OUT BY SOME OFFICIAL, IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE TO REGARD THEM AS BEING OFFICIALLY INSPIRED AS A MATTER OF USG POLICY.

3. BEGIN TEXT: SOUTH AFRICA AND THE UNITED STATES ARE GRAPPLING OVER A COMPLEX STEP-BY-STEP FORMULA THAT COULD CLINCH CRUCIAL US SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME. THE PRICE DEMANDED BY WASHINGTON IS A GUARANTEE AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR ARSENAL DEMONSTRATED BY SOUTH AFRICA'S SIGNATURE ON THE 1965 NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY.

AN INTRICATE TIMETABLE IS BEING DISCUSSED IN WHICH SOUTH AFRICA WOULD MAKE A PROGRESSIVE SERIES OF CONCESSIONS TO BE MET BY MATCHED AMERICAN RESPONSES. THE NEXT STEP IS UP TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CABINET, US SOURCES SUGGEST.

SOUTH AFRICA'S AMBITIONS TO REMAIN AT THE FOREFRONT OF NUCLEAR RESEARCH ARE SAID TO BE TIED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH ARE LIKENED IN COMPLEXITY TO THE DRAGGED OUT SERIES ON SOUTH WEST AFRICA. THE US-BUILT SAFARI 1 RESEARCH REACTOR, FOR EXAMPLE, IS SAID TO BE RUNNING OUT OF THE SPECIALISED FUEL IT NEEDS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 PRETOR 04790 171407Z

OTHER SUPPLIES WILL BE NEEDED TO FEED THE TWO FRENCH-BUILT POWER REACTORS SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN 1981. IT IS UNDERSTOOD SOUTH AFRICA ALSO NEEDS EQUIPMENT TO BUILD ITS VALINDABA PILOT URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT INTO A 250-TON-A-YEAR UNIT ABLE TO MEET DOMESTIC NEEDS. THERE ARE ALSO LONGER-TERM PLANS FOR A 5,000 TON PLANT.

EXACTLY A YEAR AGO THE US AIR FORCE SATELLITE BIG BIRD 56 SWEEPED OVER THE KALAHARI TAKING PICTURES OF A SUSPECTED ATOMIC TEST SITE. IT HAD ALREADY MADE SIX PASSES OVER THE AREA, INCLUDING ONE ON AUGUST 6, THE DAY THE SOVIET UNION TOLD WESTERN OFFICIALS IT BELIEVED SOUTH AFRICA INTENDED TO DETONATE A NUCLEAR DEVICE. EXPERTS DECIDED THE BIG BIRD PICTURES OF SHEDS AND A TOWER STRUCTURE WERE CONVINCING ENOUGH TO LAUNCH A HECTIC DIPLOMATIC ASSAULT ON PRETORIA. LATEST SATELLITE PICTURES SHOW THE SHEDS AND TOWER ARE STILL THERE.

US OFFICIALS SAY SOUTH AFRICA CONTINUES TO INSIST IT IS INTENT ONLY ON PEACEFUL NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT, BUT IT HAS SO FAR REJECTED TREATY SIGNING AND SUBMITTING TO CLOSE INSPECTION, ARGUING IT HAS A SECRET NUCLEAR ENRICHMENT PROCESS TO PROTECT. "WE ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THEIR CONCERNS," SAYS ONE US OFFICIAL. "WE AND SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHERS WITH ENRICHMENT TECHNOLOGY HAVE A COMMON PROBLEM."

SOUTH AFRICA'S WASHINGTON AMBASSADOR MR. DONALD SOLE WILL SAY ONLY THAT THE POSITIONS OF THE TWO SIDES "WERE CLARIFIED" IN LAST MONTH'S THREE DAYS OF HIGH LEVEL PRETORIA TALKS WITH TOP US NUCLEAR NEGOTIATOR GERARD SMITH AND NON-PROLIFERATION EXPERT CHARLES VAN DOREN. BUT ACCORDING TO US SOURCES, THE STEP-BY-STEP APPRAOCH WOULD FEATURE:

- A SOUTH AFRICAN AGREEMENT "IN PRINCIPLE" TO SIGN THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY.
- A VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA BY AN INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AUTHORITY TEAM.
- ACTUAL SIGNING OF THE TREATY.
- IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TREATY'S SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM WITH AGREEMENT ON AN INSPECTION PROCEDURE--A COMPLICATED NEGOTIATION THAT ITSELF COULD TAKE UP TO TWO YEARS. IN RETURN, THE US WOULD

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 PRETOR 04790 171407Z

AGREE TO FULFILL SOUTH AFRICA'S ENRICHED URANIUM ORDERS THAT HAVE BEEN HELD UP SINCE MARCH 1975 AND SUPPLY THE REPUBLIC'S NEEDS FOR BOTH RESEARCH AND POWER REACTORS.

ANY AGREEMENT IS SURE TO PROVE CONTROVERSIAL, BUT MOST US OFFICIALS SEEM TO FEEL SOUTH AFRICA ALREADY HAS AN ATOMIC WEAPON OR COULD EASILY PRODUCE ONE. LAST OCTOBER UN AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG SAID SOUTH AFRICA HAD GONE TOO FAR FOR THE US TO RISK ENDING COOPERATION. THE TASK WAS TO "PUT THE HORSE BACK IN THE BARN" BY CLOSELY MONITORING THE REPUBLIC'S FUEL SUPPLY AND INDUCING IT TO SIGN THE TREATY, HE SAID.

ANY DEAL FACES GREAT PRACTICAL PROBLEMS. THE IAEA HAS NOT YET AGREED ON RULES FOR THE INSPECTION OF ENRICHMENT FACILITIES AND IN MARCH THE US INTRODUCED LEGISLATION AGAINST THE EXPORT OF ENRICHMENT TECHNOLOGY BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL MILITARY USE. HOWEVER, IT IS SUGGESTED THAT EQUIPMENT COULD BE SUPPLIED TO SOUTH AFRICA BECAUSE SOME PROVISIONS OF THE NEW LAW DO NOT COME INTO EFFECT UNTIL 1980. END TEXT.

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